

July 12, 2004

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: MB Docket No. 04-207

Dear Chairman Powell:

We understand that the Commission is now considering government requirements that force cable operators to offer channels on a per channel or "*a la carte*" basis rather than the various tiers now offered to consumers. We write to seek your support for diversity in cable programming, and to oppose any government imposed move to a pay per channel regime, which would undermine cable's ability to provide African-American and other minority groups programming specifically for these audiences.

New, and niche programming depend upon revenue from advertising and license fees charged to cable operators. By bundling programs with smaller audiences with more popular channels, sufficient advertising revenue and license fees combine to give the small networks the financial footing to create new programming and attract larger audiences. Without having access to a wider tier of subscribers, however, the smaller networks that cater to minority audiences will be unable to raise sufficient capital to enter, or remain in, the marketplace, reducing the amount of minority-themed content and stripping cable television as a window into other cultures and communities.

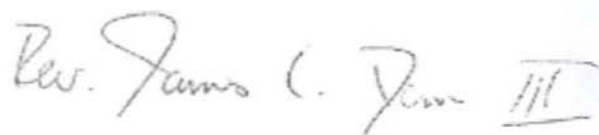
In fact, the U.S. General Accounting Office concluded last year that if consumers were required to pay individually for the channels they watch, "some cable networks, especially small and independent networks would not be able to gain enough subscribers to support the network." We are persuaded by the many leaders in the African-American community who have reached the same conclusion, and believe that minority-focused programming will be the first to suffer.

For example, Alfred Liggins, CEO of TVOne, recently said that a pay-per-channel platform would have a "chilling effect on programming diversity in America" and "could put us and many other innovative cable networks out of business." The NAACP's Washington Bureau also points out that "programming channels aimed at small but significant minority segments of the population would be threatened [by *cable a la carte*]. This is especially true of programming intended for racial and ethnic minority or foreign-language audiences." Similarly, members of the Congressional Black Caucus recently told key federal legislators that "it would have been extremely difficult if not impossible for [channels like TVOne] to have been developed" under an *a la carte* regime.

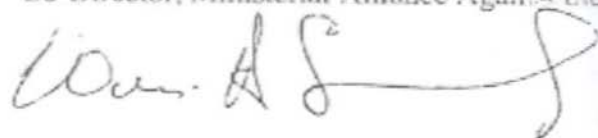
The response by so many key voices in the African-American community demonstrates the importance of cable diversity in our communities. Quality programming with African-American role models is an invaluable tool for teaching both members of our community and others who are not often exposed to different cultures. Diversity on television also provides more opportunities for minority actors and those who work on these programs.

We therefore urge you to support policies that promote the continued diversity of voices on cable television and oppose cable *a la carte* proposals that jeopardize this diversity.

Sincerely,



Reverend James L. Demus III
Executive Director - Chicago South Side NAACP
Pastor, Park Manor Christian Church
Co-Director, Ministerial Alliance Against the Digital Divide



Reverend Dr. William H. Samuels
CEO, Protestants for the Common Good
Pastor, Commonwealth Community Church
Co-Director, Ministerial Alliance Against the Digital Divide



Reverend Dr. Walter B. Johnson, Jr.
Pastor, Wayman AME Church
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